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FOR RELEASE

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## **HUD AND HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF HOUSTON SIGN AGREEMENT TO ASSIST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

HACH must construct or make 180 of its total housing units accessible within four years

WASHINGTON – The Department of Housing and Urban Development today announced that the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH) has signed a Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) committing to provide 180 fully-accessible public housing units for residents with disabilities within four years.

The agreement stems from HUD's May 2004 on-site review of HACH where HUD assessed the Housing Authority's compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II). Section 504 and Title II of the ADA prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and contain specific requirements regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities.

HUD's review revealed numerous deficiencies related to the physical accessibility of the common areas and individual housing units, as well as deficiencies in HACH's current policies and procedures.

Specifically, HUD noted that HACH had failed to provide a minimum five percent of its 3,583 housing units as accessible for individuals with disabilities. In addition, the Department noted that HACH's administrative offices, including its main Administrative Office, were not accessible to individuals with disabilities. The HACH Administrative Office is the venue where public housing and Section 8 applications are accepted and where HACH conducts intake meetings for Section 8 and public housing applicants.

The Agreement resolves several potential civil rights concerns that the Department uncovered during its review. While the Agreement requires HACH to submit periodic compliance reports to HUD, the Department also plans to vigorously monitor the Housing Authority's compliance.

“A great number of people with disabilities rely on public housing as their only housing option,” said Floyd May, HUD’s General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “This agreement makes sure this critical housing stock is accessible to people with disabilities and made available on equal terms.”

Under the terms of the far-reaching Agreement, the Housing Authority of the City of Houston will:

- Construct or convert a minimum of five percent (5%), or one hundred eighty (180), of its total housing units as UFAS-Accessible within four (4) years of the effective date of the agreement;
- Make certain that its administrative offices and newly opened Training Institute are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Designate a Section 504/ADA Coordinator to coordinate its compliance with Section 504 and Title II of the ADA;
- Adopt and implement effective Occupancy, Admission and Transfer policies to maximize the use of the available fully-accessible dwelling units and dwelling units with certain accessible features;
- Adopt a HUD-approved Reasonable Accommodation Policy to ensure that applicants and residents are advised of their right to request reasonable accommodation(s); are advised of the process for requesting reasonable accommodation(s) and/or accessible units; and provide a grievance/appeal process for individuals who were denied reasonable accommodation(s);
- Adopt an Effective Communication Policy to ensure that it provide effective communication, including the provision of appropriate auxiliary aids and services, to individuals with hearing, vision, speech and/or cognitive disabilities;

In addition to this agreement, the Department has executed Voluntary Compliance Agreements with six other major public housing authorities since 2001: the D.C. Housing Authority, the Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration, Las Vegas, the Boston Housing Authority, the Miami-Dade Housing Administration and the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh.

Anyone who believes they have experienced housing discrimination is asked to call HUD's Housing Discrimination Hotline at 1-800-669-9777. They can also visit HUD's fair housing Web site at **<http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing>**.

HUD is the nation's housing agency committed to increasing homeownership, particularly among minorities; creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans; and supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. The Department also promotes economic and community development as well as

enforces the nation's fair housing laws. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov) and [espanol.hud.gov](http://espanol.hud.gov).